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TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

YORKSHIRE DIALECT

SOCIETY

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THE VOWEL SOUNDS AND SUBSTITUTIONS OF THE HALIFAX DIALECT.

By Charles Crossland, F.L.S.

Abstract of Paper read at Quarterly Meeting, held at Halifax April 15th.

Our remarks will be confined to the Township of Halifax: a very limited area of less than 1,000 acres, when compared with the Parish of Halifax with an acreage of nearly 76,000.

If we take the whole of the parish we have a small series of dialects, just as there is a larger series in the County; and just as there is no definite and uniform dialect of Yorkshire, so there is no definite and uniform dialect of the parish of Halifax. For instance, the whole of the western boundary, including Wadsworth, Heptonstall, Stansfield and Langfield, butts upon Lancashire, and, as a consequence, the folk speech of these townships is a little flavoured with that of the Lancashire borders. Again, portions of Warley and Ovenden touch upon Haworth and Thornton; Shelf touches upon Wyke, while Fixby and Stainland border upon Huddersfield, so that we can expect nothing less than the speech of these borderlands betraying a fusion with adjoining dialects. Dealing with small and well defined areas we get a better idea of the geographical distribution of peculiar features. Often the folk of one valley differ materially from those of the next in their pronunciation of certain vowels and diphthongs, while, at the same time they agree in most others. As an illustration of this difference we take a few words containing the diphthongs *ou* and *ow*. In portions of Warley and Ovenden, two closely adjoining townships, the words *town, round,* and *cow* are drawn out into two syllables, *taa-en, raa-end, caa-a.* About Heptonstall, Wadsworth, Stansfield and Langfield they are *taawn, raawnd, caaw,* briskly pronounced. In Halifax itself they are *taan,*

raand, caa. (All the foregoing *aa's* are pronounced like the *a* in *care* = eə.) In the direction of Bradford and Leeds we get *tahn* or tān, *rahnd* or rānd, *cah* or cā. If we go further afield, on the Yorkshire wolds for instance, we hear *toon,* tūn, *roond,* rūnd, and *coo,* cū. We consider these few instances sufficient to justify our limit to the Halifax township for present purposes.

Always anxious for the accuracy of dialect productions we approach the subject with some diffidence for fear errors, notwithstanding all care, may find their way in. Though born to the dialect there is just a possibility that modernised sounds, in these days of rapid transition, may now and again be unwittingly allowed to obscure those of the real dialect. We will try to prevent this so far as we can.

In symbolising dialect vowel sounds it is impossible to take ordinary English letters always as a standard. Professor Wright points out that "In ordinary English one symbol may represent many sounds .... For instance, the letter o represents many various sounds, as may be heard from the following words:—*fox, north, woman, world, bosom, so, do.* And, on the contrary, one sound may represent many symbols, as may be heard in the words *feel, dream, he, thief, seize, machine, people.*" To secure uniformity in writing the sounds Wright's phonetic alphabet will be adhered to as far as possible. No attempt will be made to explain the presence, or original source of the various vowel sounds to be depicted. The task we have set ourselves will be fulfilled if we manage to picture them accurately.

In the Halifax dialect *a* represents various sounds. It begins with short *a* as in *cap,* runs through e, i, o and u, enters the diph thongs, and there usurps the sound of *ai* and *ei.* The short *a* makes *water* into *w-at-er, watch* into *w-at-ch,* and *want* into *w-ant.* The full *a,* as in *late,* makes *rather* into *ra-ther* or *rei-ther.* The *a* in *father* is like the one in *fathom*; in *dare* as in *dark.* One combative youngster says to another "Tha dār'nt come inta aar street." In *sat* and *wash* it is sounded like *e.* "He sed e'd wesh 'im, but 'e set 'im daan i't cheer (chīr) to rest a bit." It will be observed the *ai* in chair is sounded like *ee* as in feet. In *hang* the *a* is like *i,* "ing it op."

In *chance*, *dance*, *many*, *any* it has the sound of *o*, *chonce*, *donce*, *mon-y*, *on-y*. In *came* it has that of the *u* in *rule*, or *oo* in *food*, *cūm*, 'oo (she) cūm to see me. In *master* and *part* we get its *ai* sound, *maister*, *pairt*, the *a* as in *care* and the short *i*. In day and way the *ay* is pronounced something like the *eig* in *eight* or *weigh*. In *balm*, *calf* and *half* we retain the old *aw* or long *o* sound of the *al*, *bōm*, *cōf*, *hōf*. This sound will live on in ordinary English in words like *talk*, *walk*, *chalk*, *etc.*

E has three distinct *a*-sound equivalents. The short *e* gives us *sattled* for *settled* and *prass* for *press*, the latter though has well nigh become obsolete. Formerly, when the cloth trade was in full swing we had many a prass-shop where the cloth was pressed and finished; the workman was called a prasser, and the thick brown cardboard used was called prass paper. *Prass* is one of the words given by Watson in his history of Halifax, 1775, as an instance of *a* substituting *e*. The full *a* sound as in *late* makes *decent* into *dacent*, meaning worthy: "'E's a dacent soort ov a chap, is that." *Let*, to permit, is pronounced *late*. The *a* sound as in *father* makes *servant* into *sārvent*. In *well* (not the spring) the *e* is broaden'd out into *weel* or *wīll*. "Oh e's weel and hearty just naa" or neə. *Wet* is *wīt*. The *e* in *yes* is something like the *o*, *yoss*. In *yesterday* it is like *u*, *yusterda*. In *either* the diphthong *ei* is sounded like *o*, *o-ther*, *no-ther*. We have two groups of words in which the diphthong *ea* is differently treated in each. In one group it has the sound of *ei* as in *eight*, *meat* is *meit*, *eat* is *eit*, *preach* *preich*, *speak* *speik*, and so on. In the other group the components are separated, each letter receiving a fair share, *clean* is *cle-an*, *leaf* - *le-af*, *stream* - *stre-am*, *breath* - *bre-ath*, *sea* - *se-a*, etc., etc. *Lope* for *leap* is an exception to both. Some words with initial *e* or *h* followed by *e* as *earth*, *ears*, *heard*, etc., are pronounced as if they began with *y*, *earth* is *yerth*, *ears* - *yers*, *heard* - *yerd*; *Elland* is *Yelland*, and even the surname *Eastwood* was formerly pronounced *Yestud*. It will be noted that heard is treated as if the initial *h* was minus. The aspirate, as an initial, gives little trouble to speakers of our dialect; they rarely, if ever, use it, either in place or out.

I, besides having variants of its own, is sounded in some cases like *e*, in others like the *o* in *fork*, in others like *u*. *Tie* is *tee* or *tī*, *die*, *dee* or *dī*. In a series of words containing *igh*, as *light*, *bright*, *sight*, *night*, *wright* (millwright), the *i* is sounded like *ee* = *ī*, and the *gh* is silent, hence *līt*, *brīt*, *sīt*, *nīt*, *wrīt*. Any guttural sound these words may have had originally has altogether subsided, and the *e* come more to the surface. A few other words of a similar structure are rather differently treated with us; two of these are *right* and *fight*, *reight* and *feight*. The local pronunciation of *i* in words like *mine*, *thine*, *time*, *mice*, is difficult to define in writing by either a single or combined letter symbol. We do not see any sign in Professor Wright's equivalents to fit this sound. In our local dialect writings the diphthong *aw* has generally been told off to represent it, but it does not fulfil the duty to our satisfaction; it is not exactly representative. To our mind this sound is more accurately expressed by that of the *o* in words like *cork*, *stork*, or *fork*. This appears to be its nearest equivalent, but how to symbolise it, to make it generally understood, is what one would like to know; if we write it *o*, unless stamped by some known sign, it will lead to future misconception. However, it is hoped this difficulty will eventually be got over.

O is not substituted by so wide a range of fellow vowels as the three preceding. *A* is the only simple letter which takes its place. Its other substitutes are diphthongs the components of which the letter itself forms the major portion. The *a* sound usurps its place very largely. We can only give a few examples compared to the number it is possible to call forth. We cull the following:—*amang* - *among*, *rase* - *arose*, *belang* - *belong*, *gate* - *got*, *tangs* - *tongs*, *wark* - *work*, *warst* - *worst*. During the present century many words of this class have merged into modern English. We have known the dialect for half the century but do not remember having heard *sang* for *song*, or *lang* for *long* (except in *lang-sattle*). Both *sang* and *lang* are included in Watson's 'Remarks on the Halifax Dialect,' 1775. According to extracts from the Court Rolls of the Manor of Wakefield, John the *strang-fellow* was indicted in the year 1308 for burglary at Halifax. In many words the diphthong *oa* is sounded as

if written *oi*, hence *throat* is *throit*, *coat* - *koit*, *coal* - *koil*, *foal* - *foil*, and so on. Even the surnames *Oates* and *Coates* were formerly *Oits* and *Koits*. This vowel is often sounded like *oo* = *ū*. *Stroke* - *strūak*, *road* - *rūad*, *before* - *afūr*, *soap* - *sūap*, *vote* - *vūet*, are examples. In such words as *frozen*, *bosom*, *spoken*, *woman*, the *o* is short as in *mob*, hence we hear *froz-n*, *boz-em*, *spok-n*, etc. In *look*, *nook*, *took* and a few others, the *oo* is like short *u*, *luk*, *nuk*, *tuk*, not *lewk* or *newk*. In many cases where *oo* occurs the short *i* sound is added, imparting to the word a dissyllabic character; some of these are *gūid* - *good*, *flūid* - *flood*, *fūit* - *foot*, *schūil* - *school*, *nūinin* - *noon*. In certain other words, as *wood*, *cook*, *poor*, this diphthong has apparently not been subjected to any deviation from, or extension to, its ordinary English sound. *Book* and *mood* we should certainly, at the present time, classify in the latter group, but Watson, in 1775, says *book* was then pronounced *booik* = *buik*, and *mood* - *mooid*. It would be interesting to see tabulated such words as have escaped, cast off, or are still under this influence. Why should one word be so treated and another not? The word *loose*, when it implies to set free, as scholars, is pronounced *loze*; when it implies unfastened, as a bootlace, *lose*; while *lose*, to lose anything, is *loize*. The diphthong *ou* and *ow*, as already pointed out, are here often represented by a sound like the *Aa* in *Aaron*, or the *a* as in *care*; *out* is *aat* = eet, *about* - *baat*, *clout* - *claat*, and *bound* - *baan*. Our dialect is sometimes credited with an *ah* sound for this diphthong, but we cannot altogether accept it. In the old Halifax speech it is *aa*. We certainly have a small section of words, the present pronunciation of which gives the *ah* sound, as *flahr* - *flour*, *ahr* - *our*, *sahr* - *sour*, *shahr* - *shower*; but we may venture to say this is a modification of the old pronunciation, a sort of transition stage between the old dialect style and modern English. We have heard *flaar* and *saar*.

U has few substitutes in the dialect: *oo* being the principal. This vowel may be shortened or lengthened, still it stands fairly well for itself. In the old pronunciation of *sugar* and *sure*, *su-gar* and *su-er*, it has retained its individuality far more than it has in ordinary English, where the *s* in these two words is sufficiently prominent. *Rule* and *blue* are *rewl* = *riul*, and *blew* = *blīu*. In *pull* the *u* is long, being sounded like *oo*, *pool* = *pūl*.

YORKSHIRE DIALECT

AS SPOKEN IN THE WEST RIDING DURING THE FIFTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES.

Illustrated from The Towneley Mysteries and Modern Dialectic Literature.

By the Rev. J. Hanson Green, B.A., of Lydgate.

I have been directed to the subject of the present paper, mainly by a consideration of what I think to be the chief end and aim of a Society like this. It doubtless belongs to our work as students of the Yorkshire dialect to note and classify peculiar words and peculiar forms of words, as they now exist in the various localities; we should also try to register the present pronunciation of words. But useful and important as all this must be, something more requires to be done, or we shall fail to show for our pains more than the materials for a second-rate glossary. If I understand the matter rightly, we should desire to realise dialect as a form of living speech, with a history of its own and a valid *raison d'être*; to trace the laws of its internal development, and the causes which have modified it from without; further, to examine its grammatical and phonetic structure at every period of its history: in a word, we want to see done for dialect what has already been done, and is being done for the Queen's English by scholars like Sievers, Sweet, Ten Brink, Morris, Furnivall, Skeat, Murray, and others. I know there are great difficulties to be encountered: the chiefest of all being, of course, the comparative scarcity of genuine dialect literature in more recent times. By the period of Queen Elizabeth, the East Midland speech which, being employed by the great masters Wiclif, Gower, and above all by Chaucer, had been gradually gaining way over the rest in the 15th and 16th centuries, now completely eclipsed them—as the sun the stars—

through the glories of a Hooker, a Rawleigh, a Bacon—of a Sidney, a Marlowe, a Shakspere — then immediately to win universal popularity in the reign of James I through the Authorised Version of the Bible. Thus raised and perfected by the efforts of the finest genius, and consecrated also by the use of religion, it is not wonderful, that before it, the other dialects fell into disuse for literary purposes—and by consequence, that their present study is attended with many and great difficulties. But, on the other hand, be it always remembered, ere the East Midland dialect became classical, the other dialects *were* commonly used for literary purposes: as has been remarked by R. Morris "The English of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries diverged into many dialects, each having its own literature intelligible only to a comparatively small circle of readers; and no one form of English can be considered as the type of the language of the period." Now this fact is certainly a matter for congratulation to the student of dialect; for thus through the relics of Early English and Middle English literature he may hope to arrive at some knowledge of the way in which his own folk-speech has been shaped and developed. And despite our regrets on account of the comparative scarcity of material for the study of dialects as they have been spoken from the end of the fifteenth century onwards, such material as there is, if made easily accessible, might nevertheless serve to make the historic outlines at least apparent. Is it too much to hope that this Society may include among its aims the collection and preservation of all writings tinctured with Yorkshire dialect of any period? Perhaps also some of the more valuable and interesting fragments might be edited and published for general use.

With the views I have expressed concerning the objects and aims of a scientific study of dialect I do not expect, however, in this essay to make any contribution to that study itself: I shall esteem myself most happy if I be thought in any degree to illustrate a right method.

The grammarians of the Early English language distinguish between four dialects only, before the time of the Norman Conquest, namely, the Northumbrian, the Mexican, the West Saxon and the

Kentish. Of these the two last are sufficiently clearly marked; but the Northumbrian and the Mercian not at all clearly, owing to the comparative rarity of texts representing them. After the Conquest, however, the Northumbrian began to show the effects of Scandinavian influence more apparently, and was completely distinguished from the Mercian dialect and the rest, chiefly in the loss of inflexions, and the adoption of many new words into the vocabulary. But this account is too general and cursory. The name Northumbrian is understood to include the language as it was spoken throughout the district that lies between the Humber and the Firth of Forth. But surely we should speak rather of a Northumbrian *family* of dialects than of a Northumbrian dialect, considering the features, quite distinct in each, say, of Barbour's Bruce, written in the Lowlands of Scotland, of the ballad of Chevy Chase, which seems to have come from our present County of Northumberland, and of Richard Hampole's "Pryck of Conscience," which was composed in the neighbourhood of Doncaster. And I do not despair of the expectation that further researches into dialect, as it is now spoken, may furnish us with an instrument of criticism, whereby we shall be able nearly to localise the writing of some more relics of the Northumbrian literature, as *e.g.* "The Cursor Mundi," the political songs of Laurence Minot, and the "Metrical Homilies," written about 1320, and now preserved in a unique MS. at the Royal College of Physicians, at Edinburgh.

It is time now, however, as the shepherd in the play advises "to take out *that sothren tothe*," and approach more nearly to the consideration of the West Riding dialect, as it appeared in the fifteenth century. This is excellently represented in what are known as the "Towneley Mysteries." These plays, existing in a single MS., and published by the Surtees Society in 1828, and in 1897 by the Early English Text Society, seem to have been composed, or in some cases adapted to local use by the monks of the Abbey of Widkirk or Woodkirk, near Wakefield, and were frequently acted in and about that town during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They are thirty-two in number, and cover the whole extent of the popular theology of the times from the Creation of Adam and Eve to a description of the Last Judgment. The order of merit varies very much; but

appealing as they did to the popular ear and the popular taste, they might be expected to contain very valuable evidence concerning the folk-speech of the district in those days. This has already been remarked by several: I select, however, by preference the statement of a Wakefield man—Mr. Wm. Stott Banks—the compiler of a small glossary, of which I have made some use for this paper. He says in his preface to that work: "Several of the "Towneley Mysteries" contain words and phrases which the characters in the plays must have uttered as purely Wakefield people of our time (1865) would speak them. Cayn, for instance, in the Mactatio Abel [the slaying of Abel] talks and swears like a fractious Wakefield blackguard of twenty years ago." It would thus appear, amongst other things that that ancient and honourable town has never been quite free from representatives of the sort of people who prefer a lively and metaphorical, but rather indelicate, style of language. The fact is interesting: but we lament the fact. Nevertheless this dialect has not been stationary: as in all speech, in all countries, many words have fallen out of use, though still to be found in kindred dialects; some appear only in combination, or in a somewhat different meaning; many new words have been borrowed from all kinds of sources and fitted to the Yorkshire tongue. Then the pronunciation is altered: the law of Phonetic decay—or the tendency to an ever easier articulation, and analogy, or the conformation of words to a favourite type—these have abundant illustration. Then the force of literary English has been constantly exerted upon the dialect, tending to break down peculiarities both in grammar and in pronunciation. It is for students of dialect to note these changes and to attribute them, if they can, to their proper causes. Accordingly I now ask you to consider with me some points of verbal, phonological, and grammatical interest, comparing the language, as it appears in these "Towneley Mysteries," with what we know it to be at the present time, and, as we go along, we shall perhaps be enabled to form some idea of the processes by which the changes have come about, and may speculate as to the various causes at work. Of course, by the very nature of the case, it will be only possible to touch the merest hem of this immense subject: I hope it may sometime be more fully developed by some abler hand.

First then let us consider the Vocabulary. We notice at once the great number of words that have fallen out of use. A Wakefield friend was kind enough to go through a list of words selected from five plays, marking for me such as are no longer known in Wakefield. Allowing for errors, I find that considerably more than half of these—or about 230 in 400 remarkable words—are now quite obsolete. Amongst them are some sufficiently well known in the other Northumbrian dialects. We all know well that line of Burns in 'The Cottar's Saturday Night.'

"*Belyve* the elder bairns come drapping in."

Belyve has the meaning of *soon*, *quickly*, as we may know from the Pharao of the Mystery, who bids the messenger

"Telle on, *belyve*, and make an end."

Belyve, however, does not occur in the Wakefield dialect now.

Then there is the word *big* (to build) well known to Scottish readers, and used by one of the evil spirits in the play of the "Last Judgment," who remarks to another in a casual manner

"But, sir, I telle you before, had domsday oght tarid,
We must have *biggid* hell more wide, the warld is so warid."

i.e. if doomsday had been any later, we should have had to build to make more accommodation in hell, the world is so curst.

Ilk too, meaning same, and *mekyll*, great, are obsolete in this part of Yorkshire. Other words still extant in other dialects, but no longer in this, are *grete*, weep; *tome*, empty; and *dyng*, strike, as in

"*dyng* the dastard doun."

Among words and phrases we are sorry to think are lost beyond recovery is *hawvell* and *jawvell*, for 'gibberish', 'havers'; also the word *trants*, meaning tricks in the typical Yorkshire phrase,

"I know his *trants* fro top to taylle"

A few words survive in the dialect only in particular connexions or certain derived forms, but were in general and regular use in the fifteenth century. Such a word is *niffling* (in Huddersfield *naffling*) for trifling, as it might occur in the sentence, "He's nobbut a *niffling* sort of a chap." This points to *nyfyls*, trifles, of the "Mysteries," thus:—

"And Nell with hir *nyfyls*
Of crisp (crape) and of sylke
Tent well your twyfyls (curls)
Youre nek abowte as mylke."

Another such word is *spurrins*, from *to spyr* (pronounced 'spur'), or as in the Scottish dialect *to speir*, 'to ask,' this is the only relic of the simple verb, and is applied solely to the banns of marriage: a person who "*puts t'spurrins in*," wishes, as another phrase goes, "to be 'asked' in Church." But formerly the word *spyr* was common in the general sense, as the "Towneley" plays give evidence. One place in which it occurs is a passage in the "Abraham," which I quote as wel for the sake of the Yorkshireisms as for its pathos and beauty Abraham has bound Isaac upon the altar, but his father's heart fails him when he thinks to strike the fatal blow. Moreover the lad pleads so pathetically and yet so meekly: he mentions his love for his father, and now for his mother; Abraham unable to bear more, pretends to have forgotten some little thing and goes aside: then he makes question of himself thus—

"What shall I to his moder say?
Ffor 'Where is he?' *tyte* will she *spyr*;
If I tell her, 'Ron away,'
Hir answere bese *belife*—'Nay, sir!'
And I am ferd hir for to slay;
I ne *wote* what I shall say til hir."

and then he proceeds—

"He lyys full still, ther as he lay
Ffor to I com dar he not styr," etc.

In this stanza note besides *spyr* the word *belife*, soon, and *wote*, know, none of which are current at Wakefield to-day. The word *tyte* is nearly obsolete, but was in use twenty years ago in the phrase *Neah, ah 'll be heng'd as tite!* *i.e.*, as soon, as readily. *Tyte will she spyr* was once, therefore, very good Yorkshire for "soon will she ask," but few, I think, would easily understand it now. Other words that were once common at Wakefield, but now very rarely, if ever, heard are *brim*, sharp, *T' wind's varry brim up o't 'hill;* and *stevyn*, voice, *Thah's a rare stevven, lad.* Both are found in the Mystery Plays, with many more which like them are either obsolete or nearly obsolete. But, if we are assured of great losses from the vocabulary, the present dialect has, nevertheless, much in common with the 'Mysteries."

"*Yond* is Moyses, I *dar warand*,"

remarks a soldier in the Pharao, as any Wakefield man might to-day.

"Ye *brayde of* Mowll that went by the way,"

introducing a proverbial comparison, has also a familiar sound to one who has heard so often such expressions as "It 'll *braid o'* Dick's hat band, etc.

In the curious "Second Shepherd's Play" (*Secunda Pastorum*) one of the shepherds who has been searching Mak's cottage for a sheep which it is suspected has been stolen and concealed there, at last exclaims in despair,

"I can fynde no flesh
Hard nor *nesh*
Salt nor fresh
But two tome platers."

Nesh is still commonly used in the derived sense of delicate, *ower-nesh* for over-fastidious, is sometimes heard in the language of mild reproach.

Other examples of words still current, and to be found also in the same sense as now, in these plays are :—

adyl—to earn
blain—a sore
sakles—innocent
hek—wicket, gate
well payed—well recompensed
cf. mod. *I'll pay thee*
it seems you—it becomes you
fetyl—to prepare
wed man—married man
lig—to lie
snek—latch
lake ever amang—play at intervals
swelt—become faint
flay—to frighten
wem—swelling
by-word—proverb
were (pron. wear)—to spend
mell with—deal with
Ffelterd—inter-twined
skelp—to beat
a bat—a blow
dyn—noise
blawch—noisy talk
maroo—mate
nar—nearer

It has been remarked, nevertheless, that many ancient terms have fallen out of use altogether. On the other hand, the dialect is constantly gaining additions (1) from the standard English, in which

case the words are conformed to the local pronunciation, *e.g.*, the following picked out from a page or two of "The Clock Almanac," which are either well settled or dialectic words, or are on the way to become so :—*daycent*, *harston*, *detarmination*, *suter*, *'tice*, *contrairy* (preserving the ancient accent of the word), *pratect*, *caancil* (meaning to persuade—*thai nivver could caancil her to dew soa ageean*) *bellasses*, *kurtchey*, etc. (2) Many words have been added or revived with a new meaning to describe various appliances of manufacture, *e.g.*, *mule*, *gate*, *tenter*, *pair o' looms* (about Holmfirth : apparently a corruption of 'power-loom'), *swinger* (water-extractor, applied thereto because of identity of function with the ancient *swinging-stick*). A long list might be made of these words. (3) Some words, originally slang become recognised as dialectic terms, *e.g.*, *towser*, lock-up ; *kid coit*, another term for the same thing ; *maddle-brain*, intoxicant ; *bobby* and *slop* for policeman, etc. (4) Then, lastly, there are some of which the origin is obscure, but seem to have been invented or modified from other forms to suit the genius of the dialect. Thus in the sixteenth century the word *aye* for *yes* began to gain ground partly, no doubt, because of the patronage of Shakspere, who used it largely: but it is now more peculiarly a Northern affirmative. Probably *aye* is a corruption of *yea*. The form *yis* which has been deprecated as a modern innovation, is to be found in the Towneley plays, and was therefore current more than a century before the *aye* appeared in any English speech. Another peculiar word is *nor* or *ner* in the sense of *than*. It is an idiom of long standing, and was common in the time of James I. So that monarch writes in the preface to his "Reulis and Cautelis of Scottis Poesie." "I will end heir, lest my preface be langer *nor* my purpose and haill matter following." But perhaps this should rank rather as a grammatical peculiarity. However, we should be interested to know how the phrase *it's war ner owt* got to mean 'it is worse than anything else can be.'

The second matter that we ought carefully to consider is the change of pronunciation which has undoubtedly taken place in the West Riding dialect since the fifteenth century. In the Towneley plays we are enabled to arrive at a reasonably near approximation to

the pronunciation of the time through attention to two things, (1) the rhyme and the rhythm of the verse, (2) the spelling which was certainly meant to be phonetic, and was in fact more nearly so than our modern spelling. Anyone who would desire fully to understand the principles of this method of criticism should study A. J. Ellis' well-known work on "Early English Pronunciation," or Mr. Skeat's abstract of it in his edition of "Chaucer's Tale of the Man of Lawe," (*Clarendon Press.*)

Concerning the vowels one note is always necessary to be borne in mind, namely, that the vowels, A, E, I, O, and U, are in Early English pronounced much more nearly their Continental values, than their usual values in modern English. I propose now to take these in turn, and compare the sounds they represent in the Towneley plays with equivalents now.

A (short) pronounced ă as in hănd, is represented in our modern Yorkshire dialect by several sounds. (1) remains unchanged as in *lătly* - lately, and *wrang* - wrong; other examples are *shăkyn* - shaken, *găm* - game, *ast* - asked. (2) ă becomes ĕ (short) as *hĕv* for have, *hĕnged* for hanged.

A (long) pronounced ā, as in lārge, in some cases (1) remains unchanged as in *skard* - scared, *far* - further, *barnes* - children, *dar* - dare, etc. (2) becomes ē (ai) as *na(i)kd* for *nākyd*, *laikin* for *lākan*. This change seems to have begun early; some indications appear in the Towneley plays as, *e.g.*, we find words ending in *-ane* and *-ame* occasionally rhyming with words in *-ayn* and *-aym* (ē). (3) sometimes *ā* becomes *ow* as in *owt* - 'ought,' for former *aght*

E (short) pronounced ĕ, as in bĕnt, mostly remains unchanged as in *bent* - hill, *nesh* - tender, *mĕll* - meddle, etc.

E (long) pronounced ē as in ēre (represented in the Towneley plays also by the combinations *ea* and *ay*), (1) remains unchanged as in *bēre* - 'bear,' *brayde* - 'resembling,' etc. (2) becomes modern ē, *e.g.*, *sea* (pronounced sī) for *sē*; *sleep* (slīp) for *slepe*; *need* (nīd) for *nēde*, etc. (3) becomes ī-ă (often spelt *eea*), as in *threeap* for *thrēpe*; *heead* for *heed* (head); *deeaf* for *dēfe*. (4) sometimes becomes *ey*, *e.g.*, *neyve* for *nēfe* 'fist.'

I (short) or y, pronounced ĭ, as in bĭt, mostly remains unchanged as in *yis* - yes, *yit* - yet, *flyt* - remove, etc.

I (long) pronounced ī, as in 'machīne,' (1) is often preserved in dialect (and spelt *ee*) though mostly changed in literary English to the sound of *i* in *mīne*, *e.g.*, *neet* (nīht), *seet* (sīht), *meet* (mīht) : contrast literary English night, sight, might. (2) perverted to *ey*, as in *feight* for fight (pronounced *feet*), and *reight* for right (pronounced *reet*). Note on this last word that *reet* is also preserved as a variant.

O (short) pronounced ŏ, as in ŏn, is mostly preserved, *e.g.*, *mŏn* - man, and *fŏn* - found. [Note that *mŭn* and *fŭn* are found in the old dialect as well as in the modern, being variants on *mŏn* and *fŏn*.]

O (long) pronounced ō, as in hōme, is mostly lengthened (1) into ō-ă, *e.g.*, *hō-am* for home, *bō-ān* for bone, etc. (2) into oy, *e.g.*, *coyl*, *hoyl*, *thoyl*, for coal, hole, thole. This tendency. however, is already apparent in the Towneley plays. Or (3) into ō-y as in *mō-yn*, *sō-yn*, *nō-yn* for *mone* - moon, *sone* - soon, *none* - noon, also frequent in Towneley plays.

U (short) pronounced ŭ, as in 'shŭn,' is mostly preserved in words like *brust*, *fŭn* - found, *bŭn* - bound, etc., *cf.* the Shepherd in *Secunda Pastorum.*

> "My parte have I *fun*,
> I know my lessun,
> Wo is him that is *bun*,
> For he must abyde."

meaning that as the speaker has a wife who will have her way, he thinks it best to submit at once to petticoat government, without useless resistance ; so he may have a moderately quiet life.

U (long) ū, as in full and bush, is almost always found broad and full in modern Yorkshire, as it appears in the Towneley plays. This is perhaps the finest sound of the English language, and to the Northern dialects belongs the merit of preserving it, since other dialects tend constantly to the thinner sound of ŭ heard in the Londoner's version of 'but' (almost 'bet'). The Yorkshireman is on the other hand as likely to say *but* (*ū* as in bush, etc.): but this is a mistake on the right side.

There is one other vowel sound or rather diphthong very common in Yorkshire at the present time (heard in *sow* and *row* and *bow* of literary English) which represents an original *ow* or *ou*, as in *sower* and the like. Sometimes, however, it represents *ol* before a consonant: so we have *cowd* - cold, *fowk* - folk, *towd* - told, *sowdger* - soldier, *moudy-warp* - mold-warp, *gowd* - gold, *cowk* - colke core, besides the word *pow'd* for polled in the phrase "Who *pow'd* thee, lad"? Compare with these the word *row'd* in the Scottish song, "He *row'd* me in his tartan plaidie," of course for *rolled*, according to this very law of phonetic change. This change, however, has taken place in Yorkshire apparently, except in the case of *soldier* for which we find written *sawgeoure*, since the time when the Towneley Mysteries were composed, there being no other trace of such a pronunciation of these words to be found in them; and the single exception proves the rule.

In a similar way *al* in these days has become before a consonant *au* or *aw* in, *e.g.*, the word *bauk*, a beam, originally *balk*: compare in literary English the pronunciation of *chalk* and *talk*, and the similar change of *ai*, and also of *ol*, before a consonant in French.

Concerning the consonants very little here need be said, as by far the greater changes have taken place in the vowel sounds of the dialect. Besides, however, the falling away of *l* as just described, and the compensatory lengthening of the vowel, there deserves to be noticed also the fluctuations of the sounds of *d* and *t* and *th*. The Old English and Old Yorkshire of *father* and *mother* were *fäder* and *moder*; on the other hand the word *bottom* has in the dialect the variations of *boddom* and *bothom*. Both forms are in constant use. *Bothom* (bodhom) which is found in the Towneley plays, however, seems to be the original form, being supported as it is by the authority of other dialects. There are many other instances of this fluctuation, among them may be mentioned from the "Mysteries," *hundreth* for *hundred*, *wheder* for *whether*, *togeder* for *together*. All that can be now pronounced here upon this point is that Yorkshire dialect of both the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries does not distinguish clearly between *t* and *d* on the one hand and between *d* and *th* (*dh*) on the other.

I now come to remark on the Grammar of the dialect. I can, however, only touch on some points which are peculiar to the Northern speech as distinguished from the rest, more especially such points as are well illustrated by the Towneley plays. This limitation is necessary here on account of limited space, but makes the treatment of the subject appear so scrappy and cursory, that I would have avoided it altogether, had I not felt that the omission of some hint concerning a *grammatical* method to be used upon dialect, would be quite unpardonable. Accept these brief remarks, therefore, on the different parts of speech, as intended to suggest the necessity of this method, if the dialect is to be understood in a thoroughly scientific manner.

I.—*The Noun.* In the Towneley plays the mark of the plural number in all genders is usually the addition of *-s*, oftener *-es*, with the variants *-is* and *-ys*. Thus in the following quotation—Noé's exclamation when he sees the beginning of the Deluge—we have the additional syllable sounded.

> "Behold to the heven the *cateractes* all,
> That are open full even grete and small,
> And the *planettis* seven left has thare stall,
> Thise thoners and levyn downe gar fall,
> ffull stout
> Both halles and bowres,
> Castels and towres;
> Fful sharp ar thise showres,
> That renys aboute."

Here a careful examination will show that the last syllable of *cateractes* and *planettis* must be sounded to perfect the rhythm. But in modern Yorkshire, the ending *-es* or *-is* does not appear at all, being, as in the literary dialect, worn down to *-s*.

The plays give instances of the plural in *-en* in a very few words, *shoyn* (*shooin*) shoes, *hosen*, *oxen*, *een*, all of which, except *hosen* I think, are still in common use. Note, however, that the rarity of this form of plural has always been a mark of distinction of the Northern dialects.

Among other plural forms in the fifteenth century may be mentioned *brether* - brothers, *childer* and *hend* - hands. The first of these is quite obsolete. I am not quite sure about *hend.*

In the older language of the West Riding many possessives had no addition to distinguish them from the nominative case. I note a few among many. '*Noé flood*,' '*Sir Pilate hąll*,' '*heven kyng*,' '*David trone*,' '*shepe-tayll*.' Compare with these one or two extracts from various productions in the modern dialect 'They say at he hed some ov his *maister brass* wi' him.' The one following from an old Yorkshire diary of 1647, fol. 'Jan. 1st (New Yere's day), Fryday being *New Yere day* I rested at whome all day.' 'We spent a toathre haars tawking abaght *Nelsan Monement*.' '*Bird eggs* hung in a hahse, or *peacock feathers* stuck abaht t' seemin glass is considered unlucky.' Apparently, however, the form in *-s* is now gaining ground even in dialect.

II.—*The Personal Pronoun.* The third person plural in old Yorkshire was *thai, thair, thaim*, practically as at present in literary English. The form *'em* (Old English hem), so often heard now ('give it 'em'), is not Yorkshire at all, though thought by some to be peculiarly so. It is really characteristic of the Midland and the Southern dialects. Needless to say it never appears in the Towneley plays.

III.—*The Verb.* In the fifteenth century the verb was conjugated in Yorkshire uniformly as follows:—

Present Tense—to hope.

I hope or I hopes.	We hope.
Thou hopes.	Ye hope.
He hopes.	Thai hopes.

Note, therefore, when a Yorkshireman says 'Tha *goes* and *dons* thisen up,' or 'T'woman niver *does* nowt o't soart,' his grammar is quite correct according to the genius of his own speech. So in one of the conjugal combats (not infrequent) between Noé and his wife, the latter says on receiving a blow

"A so mary! thou *smytis* ill."

and when the Shepherd wants to suggest to Mak, the sheep-stealer that he is under grave suspicion, he says

"Mak, some men *trowes* that it should be ye."

The *past tense* is also conjugated nowadays in the same manner as it was four hundred years ago.

Past tense—to speak.

I spak.	We spak.
Thou spak.	Ye spak.
He spak.	Thai spak.

In the *present participle* the older Yorkshire form has given way very much to the influence of the literary language. In the plays we have *walkand*, *burnand*, *dyntand*, etc., for *walking*, *burning*, *dinting*, etc., and these were in fact pure representations of the Old English present participle. The only mark of the old form in *-and* consists in the omission in pronunciation of the *g* at the end of words in -ing as singin', walkin', talkin'—which gives our schoolmasters so much trouble—poor men! they do not know, I suppose, that they are pressing against an inherited tendency of all Northern folk.

Many more points of interest call for notice, but I must pass them over ruthlessly at this time, for fear your patience should give out before my paper. Only one of these do I venture to remark now. When we went to school we used to be carefully warned against the tendency if, for instance, we wished to state that a newspaper contained something outrageously incredible, to express ourselves in anything like the phrase that 'there's news in it at nobody niver nawther saw nor heeard tell on afore.' We were told that two negatives make an affirmative. I suppose they do in the Queen's English. But it is surely a sufficient apology for the Yorkshire redundancy that this rule is altogether of foreign origin. It was imported into English from the Latin Grammar, and has no credit in the oldest English. Neither was it known to the authors of the "Towneley Mysteries," who cheerfully said, of the infant Jesus, as any Yorkshire body of our day might of any new-born child

> "Sich was *never none*
> Seyn with oure ee."

I must now draw to a close, though the discussion is scarce begun. I have wished, by rapid suggestion, to point out that the West Riding dialect of Yorkshire is a historic speech, that it has a

relationship to be claimed for it with other varieties of English, and has, moreover, important facts to reveal concerning the laws whereby all language grows and ripens and decays. To my mind, the historic method is the best and most comprehensive, and I should like to see the attempt made towards a comparative and historic grammar of the Northern dialects. I recommend this method to the Society, as I may well do from a sense that I have myself obtained some pleasure and benefit even in this weak essay to illustrate it. Now with the actor at the end of the "Mystery" I say

> "God blys you more and myn,
> And have now all good day."

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1899.

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„ Annual Subscriptions ...	29	10	0
	£42	19	4

	£	s.	d.
By Rent of Rooms	1	15	6
„ Printing Transactions, &c. ...	16	1	9
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